

*Museum Attracts Nearly 40,000 Visitors a Year and is Housed in 35,000 sq ft Hanger With Vintage Aircraft*

*Schumer and Israel: Museum is a Tribute to Our Veterans and LI's Unique Role in American Aviation - Will Remain a Vital Attraction for Region*



U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer and Congressman Steve Israel announced today that the American Airpower Museum at Republic Airport has been saved from certain demolition from the Federal Aviation Administration's runway safety program. In 2008, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced plans to demolish two hangars at Republic Airport, one of which houses the American Airpower Museum, to expand the runway and meet new runway safety area criteria. At the time, the FAA claimed it did not have the authority to utilize funding from the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) to move the museum, but was permitted under statute to demolish the structure, a position that Schumer and Israel strenuously argued against.

After years of negotiations and an unwillingness of the FAA to budge, Schumer and Israel drafted language for the FAA reauthorization bill that would explicitly and unequivocally state that the FAA did in fact have the authority to use federal funds to relocate the museum,

removing any ambiguity over the agency's authority to do so. Under the threat of Schumer and Israel's legislation, the FAA finally conceded in a letter to Schumer that "the FAA does not have the legal authority to compel the [airport] to demolish the structure." Additionally, the FAA reversed itself and made clear that federal funds could in fact be used, under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), to relocate the structure. This reversal by the FAA makes a major turnaround from earlier positions of the agency.

"This a monumental win for not only Long Island, but for veterans across the country and the proud aviation history of our armed services," said Schumer. "The fighters, bombers, and transport planes housed and displayed here were vital to the defense of our nation. It's imperative that our children and our grandchildren can visit the American Airpower Museum and understand role these aircraft played and the sacrifices that were made by these pilots to ensure our freedom. To do anything but preserve and protect this facility would be an historical tragedy and I am pleased that working with Congressman Israel we have been able to save the museum."

"The work of Long Islanders helped win us World War II and the Cold War, and the American Airpower Museum enshrines that history. Losing it would have been an insult to the generations of Long Islanders who dedicated themselves to freedom. And that's why I fought so hard with Senator Schumer to preserve it. We're not just preserving a building, we're preserving history," said Rep. Israel.

In June 2009, Schumer and Israel appeared at the museum and launched a major drive to push the FAA to protect the historic museum and began implementing a legislatively strategy to stop the FAA from demolishing the hangar. At the same time, they have been working on a parallel track with New York State's Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to designate the hangar historically significant and eligible for the National Registry of Historic Places, in order to further block the FAA from moving forward with any demolition plans.

While the FAA is required to complete the federal environmental review process, the only options remaining for the FAA now are relocation of the museum on the Republic Airport grounds or maintaining the museum at its current location. Since the current location would impede the ability for Republic Airport to expand its runway, the only feasible outcome appears to be relocation. According to the FAA, relocation can now be funded with Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding as a "required mitigation measure," based on Schumer and Israel's efforts in pressing the FAA.

Joining the two lawmakers at the announcement today was Josephine Raichele of West Babylon, an original Rosie the Riveter, who worked at the hangar that now houses the museum when it was manufacturing the P-47 Thunderbolt, which was the primary fighter aircraft that fought the Germans during World War II.

*Photo Credit: American Airpower Museum*